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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

September 17, 1959

Participants:

Ambassador Lodge
Ambassador Thompson
Mr. Pedersen
Mr. Akalovsky

Mr. Khrushchev
Mr. Gromyko
Ambassador Menshikov
Mr. Sukhodrev

WMS

Subject:

Train Trip between Washington, D.C. and New York City

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Mr. Kohler



During a general conversation with Khrushchev on the train to New York I recalled an incident of my childhood - being taken to see Henry Adams in 1910 - and that he had predicted that by the 1950's the two great powers of the world would be the Soviet Union and the United States. That seemed to interest Mr. Khrushchev.

He used it as occasion to bring up the subject of nuclear tests, which he said he hadn't followed. I said I thought the Soviet Union and the United States have the same interest in bringing about an orderly world in view of the fact that the bi-polar world was not a realistic idea even now and that there are five or six countries approaching technological and economic maturity and that the time when we would be the only two great powers was not going to last forever.

He said France could probably make a bomb but it took more than this to be a big power. Sweden could make a bomb, Germany could probably make some, China and India could within the next ten or fifteen years. And I said maybe Brazil much later on, and he said very much later. He agreed wholeheartedly that we have a common interest in getting an orderly world.

On the negotiations on the cessation of nuclear tests he said that we wanted to get intelligence operators into the Soviet Union. I said you could have the same type of people here. He said we don't want them in your country. I said I thought he had no worry about the control posts that would exist in the Soviet Union because with all the resources in

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- 2 -

the Soviet state they could easily mislead them on any intelligence matters.

Khrushchev said the talks had reached a point where we wanted two-thirds foreigners to be in the control posts and they only want one-third. He thought this was a question that he and the President could work out. Perhaps he has a 50-50 split in mind.

Then he got on to missiles and at great length he expressed how help-less bombers were and how much higher and faster missiles are. He said winged missiles were no good. They could be shot right down. He also said the USSR had ICBMs while the US had none. Therefore, the USSR was stronger than the US. I just let him talk and finally said that I could agree that they are ahead of us in rockets. I said when you have two great technological powers like the Soviet Union and the United States one is going to be ahead at various times. We were ahead with the atomic bomb - you are ahead in rockets at the moment. Those things don't last and I am sure, I said, that you can be in no doubt of our retaliatory power, and that it is quite im-possible - if you were to use these missiles - not to expect suicidal results for you. I said you can hit our cities but not our retaliatory military in-stallations. I also said that neither of us seemed to have perfected anti-missile defenses. (He nodded affirmatively on what appeared to be both of these points). I said our bombers and our Navy and our "other things" would "devastate" the Soviet Union. He agreed that a war would be suicidal for both sides.

He then shifted to military bases. He said there we were with those bases and hydrogen bombs in West Germany. I said you have bases in East Germany and he said they weren't bases. I said why not, and after avoiding a reply a few times he said they didn't have the hydrogen bomb there. I said you could move them in a very short time across a few miles or roads. We have to come across the Atlantic Ocean.

Khrushchev said they did not need to put nuclear weapons in East Germany. They could destroy West Germany from the Soviet Union. How many bombs do you imagine it would require to destroy even the United Kingdom, he asked.

Then he mentioned our bases in Spain and Morocco. I said - Mr. Chairman, I was in the Senate when NATO was created. It was created as a reaction to Stalin. If you had been the head of the Soviet state I daresay things might have been different. He nodded his head at this. You know enough to realize there is no offensive intent in NATO at all. It is a purely defensive organization. The countries asked for it because of fear.

I also said I believed that overseas bases were something that weren't going to last forever. It doesn't need to worry you at all. He said in response to this whole little speech of mine: There is much in what you say; in certain respects you are right and in certain ones you are not.

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- 3 -

He then shifted to less serious subjects. We were just outside of Philadelphia. There were a lot of old two-story houses through the right window (next to which he was sitting.) He said they had some old houses in the USSR but did not build like that any more. I said I would like for him to look at the ones on the left, where there were new houses, as well as the right. He said this was fair - we have a lot more bad housing than you have. He had not come here to look at bad things, of which they had enough at home. He then said his advisers had told him last night he should watch out forme because I would twist him around my little finger. They told him I would show him only the good things and he should insist on seeing some of the bad ones too. He said he had told them that he did not want to see anything that I did not want to show him. I said I thought if anyone were twisted around a little finger it would not be him around mine and that I wanted him to see anything he wanted, both good and bad.

He then referred to my reputation for arguing with Soviet diplomats in the UN. He said - go in and give the Russian diplomats hell. Beat them up; it is good for them; they will get wiser that way. Gromyko then spoke up for the first time and said he disagreed with this. Khrushchev said - you see, the man speaks up for himself.

Khrushchev then told the old story about two Jewish merchants, each of whom wanted to know where the other was going. One of them asked the other where he was going. The second one, who was going to Cherkasky, figured that if he said he was going to Cherkasky the first one would then think he was not going there. The second Jewish merchant, when he heard the first one say he was going to Cherkasky, reasoned that he said he was going to Cherkasky so he would think he was not and therefore knew he was going to Cherkasky. Khrushchev laughed heartily at this joke and said that although he preferred to talk directly he supposed this was the way diplomats had to talk to each other. He pointed at Gromyko and me and asked which one of us was going to Cherkasky.

After a few more jokes and inconsequential talk I excused myself to allow him to finish his speech (and to find time to write this up).



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